

Department of Justice High-Risk Metropolitan Area Interoperability Assistance Project *Atlanta, Georgia*



Addressing Interoperability

The Department of Justice (DOJ) Wireless Management Office (WMO) is working to improve long-term federal interagency communications across the Nation. As an interim step, and as a response to a request from the House/Senate CJS Appropriations Subcommittee staff, the DOJ WMO has been leading the High-Risk Metropolitan Area Interoperability Assistance Project (“25 Cities”) to provide targeted cities with basic and immediate interagency communications capabilities among local, state, and federal agencies during emergency response. Twenty-five cities were selected by criteria including perceived risk and population size. As stakeholders in 1 of the 25 cities, Atlanta metropolitan area local, state, and federal public safety agencies have been working collaboratively with the DOJ WMO to address basic interoperable communications.

Participating Agencies

Partnership among Atlanta area local, state, and federal public safety agencies has been instrumental in the development of comprehensive interoperability solution sets. Participating agencies have included—

- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives
- City of Atlanta
- Clayton County
- Cobb County
- Coweta County
- De Kalb County
- Drug Enforcement Administration
- Fayette County
- Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
- Fulton County
- Henry County
- Georgia Bureau of Investigation
- Georgia Dome/Georgia World Congress Center Police
- Georgia Emergency Management Agency
- Georgia State Patrol
- Gwinnett County
- Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection
- U.S. Marshals Service
- U.S. National Park Service
- U.S. Postal Inspection Service
- U.S. Secret Service

Key Successes

DOJ and area stakeholders successfully achieved basic interoperability and emergency response communications improvements in the Atlanta metropolitan area through the implementation of several interoperability solutions. The solutions, which leverage existing disparate communications systems, provide new wide-area interoperability capabilities. Additionally, in the course of meeting this project’s interoperability goals, federal stakeholders were able to expand the working relationships among other federal agencies, as well as key local and state agencies, to foster the development of new interoperability objectives for the area.

A federal interoperability channel was implemented to support federal agencies with communications during an emergency response. DOJ installed a 125-watt conventional repeater to provide reliable coverage throughout the metropolitan area. Hosted and maintained by the FBI, the new very high frequency (VHF) narrowband interoperability channel provides a means for communications among command and control personnel during emergency responses.

To support interoperability among public safety radio systems in the immediate metropolitan area, four fixed audio switches were implemented between two area dispatch centers: two switches at the Atlanta FBI field office and two switches at the Fayette County dispatch center. The audio switches were outfitted with VHF, UHF, and 800 megahertz control stations to link disparate, and out-of-band radio systems. The audio switches can be used to enable an “always-on” net for long-term operations or an ad hoc patch for immediate, short-term interoperable communications. In addition, audio switch operators can patch the federal interoperability channel with participating agencies’ radio systems to provide interagency communications between federal agencies and local and state agencies.

In addition to providing equipment and installation services, DOJ ensured that FBI and Fayette County technicians received training from the audio switch manufacturer, JPS Communications, to effectively operate the new equipment and interoperability capabilities.

To address management issues of the new interoperability equipment, DOJ worked with several stakeholders to develop standard operating procedures (SOP) to outline the use of communications equipment and to ensure proper operation of interoperability resources. Development of SOPs is ongoing—key stakeholders continually update and revise the documents to meet their changing requirements.

Moving Forward

The cooperation and support between participating agencies and DOJ WMO provided scalable solutions designed to give additional agencies future access to the interoperability solutions. Sustained operations, maintenance, and support of these interoperability solutions will be coordinated by key stakeholders. These efforts, along with stakeholder support, will ensure continuity in addressing interoperable communications among public safety agencies in the Atlanta metropolitan area.

Contact Information

If you would like to know more about this initiative and the interoperability solutions, please contact—

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